



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the  
Interior

Steamtown National Historic Site

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## Steamtown National Historic Site News Release

February 28, 2006

For Immediate Release

### Women in Railroading Exhibit on Display at Steamtown

Scranton, PA - Steamtown National Historic Site opens a temporary exhibit titled "Women of Iron, Women of Steel: Working on the Railroad." Installed in recognition of the March celebration of Women's History Month, the exhibit will remain on display until June, 2006. The exhibit is in the Changing Exhibits Gallery in the site's Visitor Center.

Ella S. Rayburn, Steamtown Museum Curator, developed the idea then designed the exhibit. The Park has about 5,000 records representing employees of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad; of these only 136 can be identified as belonging to women. They are part of the limited amount of archives saved when the Scranton passenger station was rehabilitated into a hotel in the mid 1980's.

One document from each of the 136 folders is on exhibit. The point, according to Ms. Rayburn is, "For this brief moment, we bring back the names of these women. The women we are remembering here worked as clerks, janitresses, and matrons from about 1910 to 1960. These are every day women working ordinary jobs, but becoming extraordinary as they had to buck a society and a hiring system designed to exclude them based solely on gender. There are a number of notes in the files about hiring a woman but only until a man was found who would take the job."

Because the records are an odd assortment, the exhibit has documents from women who worked in the Lackawanna's offices on piers in New York all the way to the other end of the Lackawanna Railroad in Buffalo. Their jobs paid little, but some women held the same custodial job for a 35 year career, others worked only a week or two. A few of the names reflect Eastern European origin, but mostly they are from the British Isles and one is identified as African-American. These names are captured through an array of mundane documents: letters of reference, physicals, job applications, internal letters citing performance errors and one praising a particular action, firings, resignations, and retirement. About half of the women represented in the exhibit worked in the Scranton offices and the passenger and the freight stations of the Lackawanna.

Located in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Steamtown National Historic Site is open daily from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. until April 1, 2006. As of April 2, 2006, daily hours will be 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. From Interstate 81, follow exit 185 (Central Scranton Expressway); follow signs to the main entrance at Lackawanna Avenue and Cliff Street. Additional details regarding interpretive, educational programs and activities and weather-related cancellations may be obtained by calling (570) 340-5200, toll free (888) 693-9391, or by visiting the Steamtown NHS web site at [www.nps.gov/stea](http://www.nps.gov/stea).

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